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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Joint workplan of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report provides a review of the implementation of the 2006 joint workplan of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. It also contains the joint workplan for 2007.

* E/CN.6/2007/1.

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I. Introduction

1. On the basis of Commission on the Status of Women resolution 39/5 of 31 March 1995 and Commission on Human Rights resolution 1997/43 of 11 April 1997, a joint workplan is prepared annually for the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The workplan for 2006 is contained in document E/CN.4/2006/59-E/CN.6/2006/9.

2. Cooperation between the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women continued in 2006 towards the objectives of achieving gender equality and the protection and promotion of women's human rights. The major joint activities that were carried out are outlined below.

II. Review of the implementation of the joint workplan for 2006

A. General

3. During the implementation of the current joint workplan, the exchange of information continued between OHCHR, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The Division and OHCHR continued to cooperate within the framework of inter-agency mechanisms, especially the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality under the leadership of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. OHCHR and the Division participated in the fifth session of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality from 22 to 24 February 2006 in New York, contributing to identifying the core elements of a system-wide gender mainstreaming policy and strategy. Both participated actively in several of the Network task forces, including the task force on women, peace and security. The Division and OHCHR also collaborated within the context of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, specifically in the cluster on the advancement of women.

4. The Division for the Advancement of Women and OHCHR continued to exchange documents, reports and information relating to the work of the human rights treaty bodies, including concluding observations, comments, general recommendations and views relating to communications, and circulated those documents to the chairpersons and members of the treaty bodies.

5. During the year, the Division supported OHCHR in the identification of experts on women's rights to conduct the training activities of OHCHR with respect to reporting under international human rights instruments, as well as a number of other training and technical cooperation activities, expert meetings and panel discussions.

6. The Division for the Advancement of Women and OHCHR continued coordinating their databases and websites, and the Division regularly followed up with OHCHR on progress in updating the treaty body database. OHCHR and the Division disseminated information about the human rights treaty system, including

the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, through their networks.

B. Support for human rights treaty bodies

7. The Division for the Advancement of Women and OHCHR continued to support the work of human rights treaty bodies and implementation of the major international human rights instruments. Work to support the reform of the treaty body system also continued.

8. The High Commissioner for Human Rights met with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its thirty-fourth session, in January 2006, to discuss, inter alia, the proposal of OHCHR for a unified standing treaty body and the proposal contained in a plan of action submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session (see A/59/2005/Add.3) to transfer responsibility for supporting the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to OHCHR. In January 2006, the High Commissioner also held a dialogue with staff of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division.

9. OHCHR attended briefings convened by the Division for entities of the United Nations system in advance of the sessions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. OHCHR also participated in two rounds of inter-agency meetings, convened by the United Nations Population Fund, aimed at submitting joint reports by United Nations country teams to the Committee. OHCHR continued to provide information for the reports prepared by the Division for the Committee on ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee, a regular item on the Committee agenda.

10. The Division for the Advancement of Women contributed to documentation prepared for the fifth inter-committee meeting and the eighteenth meeting of the chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies, which took place in Geneva, from 19 to 21 June and 22 to 23 June 2006, respectively. In particular, the Division provided input into the finalization of harmonized guidelines for reporting under the seven core human rights treaties (see HRI/MC/2006/3 and Corr.1), and submitted updated information from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for the report on reservations (see HRI/MC/2006/5 and Rev.1) and the report on working methods of the treaty bodies (see HRI/MC/2006/4 and Corr.1). The Division staff participated in both meetings, as did the Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women.

11. OHCHR and the Division for the Advancement of Women supported treaty bodies in their follow-up to the recommendations of the eighteenth meeting of chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies and the fifth inter-committee meeting. This included the organization, by OHCHR, of a meeting of a working group consisting of one member of each of the seven human rights treaty bodies, on the harmonization of working methods, from 27 to 28 November 2006.

12. A staff member of the Division participated in the informal meeting organized by OHCHR in Malbun, Liechtenstein, from 14 to 16 July 2006, hosted by the Government of Liechtenstein, to discuss the proposals of the High Commissioner on

reform of the treaty body system. A senior staff member of the Office participated in the fifth informal meeting of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, organized by the Division and held in Berlin, Germany, from 2 to 4 May 2006, to review, inter alia, issues related to treaty body reform and the proposals of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

13. In December 2005, OHCHR and the Division for the Advancement of Women jointly organized a subregional workshop on the implementation of the concluding observations and comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in Egypt, for six countries in North and West Africa. During the year, OHCHR and the Division convened a number of other meetings, including training seminars and other capacity-building activities, to support implementation of human rights treaties, including concluding observations and comments at the national level.

C. Interaction with special procedures mandate holders

14. The Division for the Advancement of Women continued its interaction with special procedures mandate holders. At the invitation of the Division, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences served on the advisory committee for the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122/Add.1 and Corr.1). The Special Rapporteur also held consultations with the Division in October 2006, on the occasion of her dialogue with the Third Committee of the General Assembly.

D. Support for intergovernmental bodies

15. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women addressed the Human Rights Council at its first and second sessions, in June and October 2006, highlighting the linkages between gender equality and human rights.

16. The Division for the Advancement of Women and OHCHR continued efforts to enhance cooperation between the Commission on the Status of Women and the former Commission on Human Rights. The Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights addressed the Commission on the Status of Women at its fiftieth session in March 2006, and the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women participated in the second session of the Human Rights Council in September 2006. The High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women discussed opportunities for future collaboration between these two intergovernmental bodies.

17. OHCHR participated in an expert group meeting, organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), hosted by the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, in Florence, Italy, from 25 to 28 September 2006, on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child. The meeting was convened in preparation for the fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women and its consideration of the theme "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child". OHCHR also facilitated participation of the Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in this meeting.

18. Coordination of the preparation of reports to be submitted to intergovernmental bodies continued. In relation to the ongoing work of the Commission on the Status of Women on advisability of the appointment of a special rapporteur on laws that discriminate against women, OHCHR provided the Division with its views on ways and means that could best complement the work of the existing mechanisms and enhance the capacity of the Commission with respect to discriminatory laws (see Commission on the Status of Women resolution 50/3; see also E/CN.6/2006/8). OHCHR also provided an input to the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women. These views and inputs will be reflected in the relevant reports to be submitted to the Commission at its fifty-first session. OHCHR contributed to the report of the Secretary-General on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system, submitted to the Economic and Social Council (see E/2006/65).

19. OHCHR continued to participate as a member of the task force established by the Division for the Advancement of Women in support of the preparation of the Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women (see General Assembly resolution 58/185). OHCHR regularly participated in task force meetings via teleconference, and contributed comments on the draft of the study, and to the dissemination of information about the study. It contributed to the inventory compiled by the Division of activities on violence against women implemented by the entities of the United Nations system.

20. The Division continued its cooperation with the Secretariat for the Secretary-General's study on violence against children, and provided comments on the draft of the report of the Secretary-General. The Director of the Division and the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women met with the independent expert on 9 June to exchange views on the recommendations of both studies.

III. Joint workplan for 2007

21. Several recent developments will shape future cooperation between the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women, including the decision of the Secretary-General to transfer responsibility for supporting the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to OHCHR in Geneva and the establishment in OHCHR of a Women's Human Rights and Gender Unit, pursuant to the High Commissioner's action and strategic management plans. The Secretary-General's follow-up to the recommendation of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence to establish one United Nations entity focused on gender equality and women's empowerment, and any action Member States may be taking thereon, will also impact on such future cooperation. Accordingly, OHCHR and the Division will keep under review the joint workplan for 2007 so as to update it as necessary.

A. Support for human rights treaty bodies

22. Discussions continue between OHCHR and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women on the implications of the decision of the Secretary-General to transfer responsibility for servicing the

Committee to OHCHR. The High Commissioner for Human Rights will meet with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its thirty-seventh session (15 January to 2 February 2007) to discuss aspects of the High Commissioner's plan of action pertaining to the human rights treaty bodies and the transfer of responsibility for supporting the Committee to OHCHR.

23. OHCHR and the Division for the Advancement of Women will continue to coordinate, cooperate and exchange information on matters falling within their respective mandates and responsibilities. Activities will include the exchange of documents, reports and the results of the work of the treaty bodies and the circulation of those documents to the chairpersons and members of the treaty bodies; follow-up to the recommendations of the eighteenth meeting of chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies and the points of agreement of the fifth inter-committee meeting, including support to experts designated to participate in working groups established by these meetings, and any future working groups that might be set up; and updating of the synthesized report on the working methods of all treaty bodies. OHCHR will provide information for the reports prepared by the Division for the Committee on ways and means of expediting its work. Exchange of information and collaboration will continue among staff of OHCHR and the Division and designated Committee members with regard to communications and inquiry procedures.

24. The Division will contribute to the preparations for and conduct of the nineteenth meeting of persons chairing human rights treaty bodies and the sixth inter-committee meeting and to any ad hoc meetings in relation to the work of the treaty bodies that may be convened during 2007. The Division, the Chairperson and designated members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women will participate in those meetings. The Division will contribute to the ongoing consultation process on treaty body reform with a view to strengthening the implementation of the treaties at the national level.

B. Support for intergovernmental bodies and special procedures

25. The Division for the Advancement of Women and OHCHR will continue to support the participation of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women and of the President of the Human Rights Council in each other's sessions and the participation of the Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in their sessions.

26. The Division for the Advancement of Women and OHCHR will continue to seek input and provide comments for other reports, as requested. The Division will provide targeted input for the work of special procedures.

27. The Division for the Advancement of Women will cooperate with OHCHR on follow-up to any action the Commission on the Status of Women will be taking at its fifty-first session with respect to a mechanism to address discriminatory laws.

C. Technical cooperation, advisory services and meetings

28. The Division for the Advancement of Women and OHCHR will improve early information exchange and coordination on technical cooperation activities, in

particular by sharing plans for such activities, cooperate whenever possible in such activities, especially with respect to training activities on reporting under international human rights instruments and the follow-up to concluding comments and observations, and cooperate in preparing and piloting training packages on international human rights instruments. Staff from each entity will be invited to contribute to and participate in relevant workshops, as appropriate. OHCHR will also invite the Division to participate in relevant meetings of the field representatives of OHCHR.

29. The Division for the Advancement of Women will continue to participate as a member of the reference group for the Action 2 global programme on strengthening United Nations support for the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide.

D. Awareness-raising and outreach

30. The Division for the Advancement of Women and OHCHR will continue to ensure that the electronic database covering the seven treaty bodies is up to date, fully operational and accessible to both. Websites will also be systematically updated and improved to enhance information about human rights in general and women's human rights in particular. The Division will continue to monitor progress with respect to integrating gender perspectives in the work of intergovernmental and expert bodies.

E. Inter-agency cooperation

31. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women, under the leadership of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, will continue to cooperate within the framework of inter-agency mechanisms.

32. With the establishment of its Women's Human Rights and Gender Unit, OHCHR has reinforced its capacity to work on women's human rights and press for full implementation of the international legal framework, which proscribes discrimination on the basis of sex and guarantees equal civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights for men and women. OHCHR envisages continued close cooperation with the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women and other United Nations partners, including the proposed consolidated entity, to advance gender equality and the protection and promotion of women's human rights.